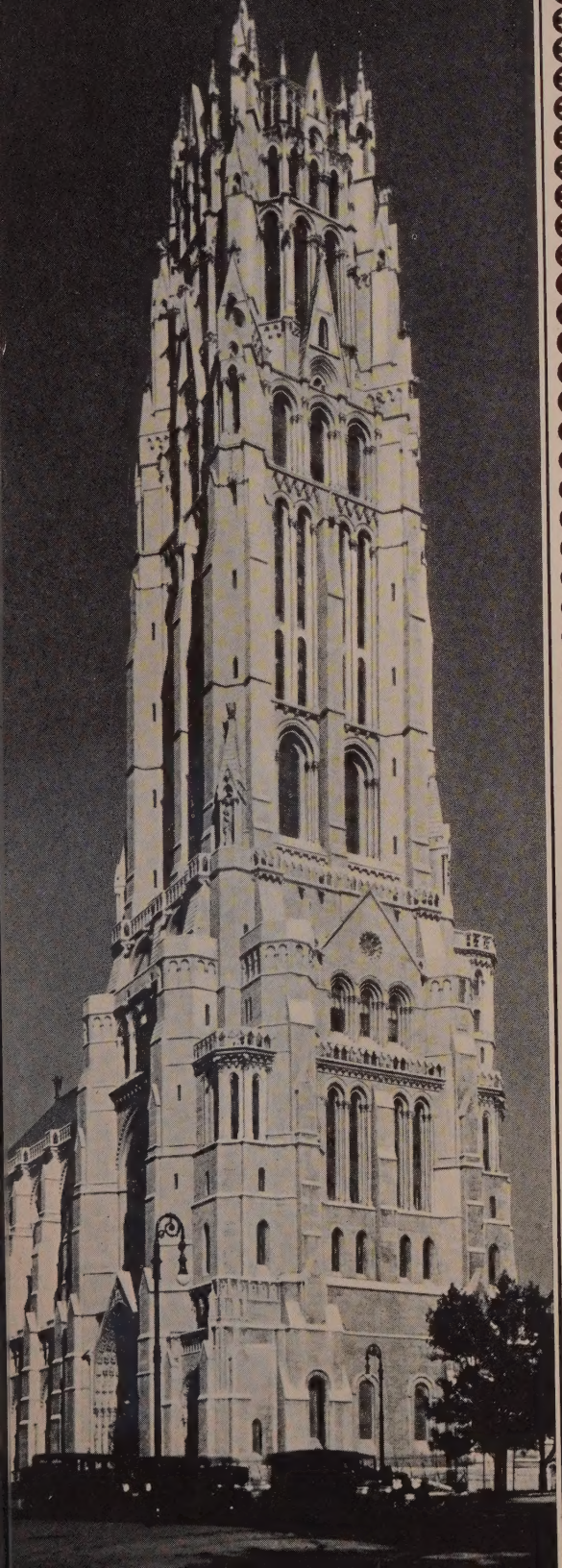

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Glorifying the Commonplace

As Religion Sees It

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THANKSGIVING IN OTHER DAYS

By permission of The Grolier Society, publishers of The Book of Knowledge.

This picture, made from an old print, shows the artist's idea of the celebration of the first day of Thanksgiving at Plymouth, Mass., in 1621. Its quaintness makes it attractive even if it is not entirely accurate. In the early times of which it tells us the day was kept as a solemn festival. Everyone went to church and special sermons were preached.

Glorifying the Commonplace

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

Of one mood and attitude prevalent in this company we may be certain: as individuals we feel dwarfed by the titanic forces that sweep across the world. Ours is a time when if there is a war it is likely to be a world war; if there is a depression it is a world depression; if we find a solution it must be planetary. How gigantic everything is! And in the midst of it are we ordinary people with our commonplace lives—handling routine duties, running families, raising children, getting on with our friends, playing a little, worrying a good deal about small problems that seem large to us, and in general absorbed with commonplace details.

This disproportion between the immensity of the world's affairs and the mediocrity of our daily lives disturbs us at times when we see how intimately planetary problems affect us. World wars devastate our lives. World depressions cruelly impinge on us. Not from altruistic motives only we feel we ought to be doing something for the world, for our sakes and for our children's sakes, and when in church or elsewhere some servant of the common good challenges us to come to the help of the Lord against the hosts of the mighty, that only makes us feel the worse. For on the morrow, of necessity, we have to go back to the routine of mediocre daily tasks.

As your minister I know well one thing which makes some soil on Sunday mornings resistant to the seed. What many a sermon confronts is not disbelief or deliberate sin or careless indifference, but a drab sense of life's insignificant commonness—routine details, limited circumstances, mediocre abilities, repetitive small burdens to be borne and drudgeries to be attended to. One of our humorists said he used habitually to put in his diary, "Got up, washed, and went to bed."

When, therefore, the transcendent principles of Christ and the kingdom of God are presented to our allegiance, it sounds like a chance to invest a million dollars offered to a man who hardly knows where his next meal is coming from. What have our mediocre lives to do with that?

This morning, therefore, let us seek for some insights which may help us to redeem our mediocrity. Strangely enough, a message about that very matter comes from the New Testament. At first sight there seems nothing commonplace about the New Testament. Whether one thinks of the Roman Empire as the gospel's setting, or of the amazing triumph of early Christianity as the gospel's achievement, or of the high principles of Christ as the gospel's demand, New Testament Christianity was a transcendent affair. Yet Paul, writing to the Corinthian church in the midst of it, thought it worth while to say, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." So the commonplace details of daily life were to be lifted up as contributory participants in the great enterprise and so glorified.

As we try to grasp the significance of this, consider that commonplaceness is not generally an inherent attribute of

anything. Generally it is the result of our way of looking at things.

> The poem hangs on the berry-bush,
> When comes the poet's eye;
> The street begins to masquerade,
> When Shakespeare passes by.

Indeed, at the risk of seeming irreverent, I ask how deeply we have considered the commonplaceness of Jesus? One means by that not simply his being born in a stable and being reared in a carpenter shop; one means his habitual way of thinking and talking. Jesus almost exclusively talked about commonplace things, about grass and flowers and little children, about husbandmen and their vineyards, carpenters and their building, shepherds and their sheep, about families where weddings are celebrated or where a wayward boy has left home—yes, where new patches are put on old garments and two sparrows can be bought for a farthing by the poor. He talked about business and money, about the varied soils the farmer uses, about the changing colors of the sunset sky. That is why his teaching never sounds like any official religion that ever has been on earth or is on earth now. It is all about ordinary, average, human life with its humdrum details lifted up into ineffable significance and beauty. So the poem does hang on the berry-bush when comes the poet's eye.

Let us see, then, if we can so share the Master's insights as to redeem our mediocrity. For one thing, if he were speaking to us I am sure he would say that fine personal quality is never commonplace and that personal quality is not a matter of size but of spirit, not of quantity but of quality. To be sure, personal character by itself alone cannot solve the world's problems. Many Ethiopians and Italians have superior individual characters, but that alone did not prevent the present catastrophe. We are caught in a series of obsolete social structures so that all the individual character we can engender will not save us without a reconstruction of the social order. Thus we can take the best material that can be quarried but if our architecture is wrong we can make a hideous mess of the resultant building. That tragic thing we are doing in society today with the best of human character. It is terribly possible to be moral men in an immoral society. Nevertheless, while that is true, our surest hope of reconstructing the social order wisely and well lies in enough solid character in plain people to rest it on. Give the wisest social architect in the world a free hand and he could not make a social order that would last a year without enough good quality in plain people to found it on. So, even when one thinks of world affairs, disproportionate though it appear, fine personal character is not commonplace —not anywhere, at any time, in anybody.

That is especially clear in the family life. Family life's bloom is frequently rubbed off by the blight of commonplaceness, especially when a home must be run on a low economic level. No sooner have you served one meal than another faces you. After every menial task performed another clamors to be done. Life becomes littered with trivial details. Well enough for a poet like George Herbert to sing,

> Who sweeps a room as for thy laws,
> Makes that, and the action, fine,

but then, George Herbert was a man and probably didn't have to sweep a room—certainly not day after day after day. So, often mediocrity spoils homemaking.

Listen then to this quotation and see if you can guess its origin: "The cry now is, 'Preserve the family!' and this not only means to maintain stable, loving marital relationships and rear children properly but includes in new words the ancient injunction to children, 'Honor thy father and mother.' " Where is that from? Russia! But I thought that a few years ago in Russia they had decided to get on without much basic family life, that with postal card divorces and the communal rearing of children, the old-fashioned family was considered fairly obsolete. Yet now they are saying that Russia's hope lies in stable, loving marital relations and the rearing of children properly. Here is one of the most amazing events in the modern world. The cry is up in Russia, Preserve the family!

So basic is that in any culture which hopes to persist that nothing contributory to a beautiful home can ever be really commonplace. If anyone here has a chance to help make family life lovely, gracious, and redeeming, I should suppose that whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, you might glorify that.

Nor is personal character anywhere commonplace. Some of the profoundest inspirations that have ever come to us have come from plain people doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, handling common tasks with an uncommon spirit. So Dr. Jowett once went into a cobbler's shop in England and as he watched the shoemaker at his labor, he said, "Don't you get tired and unhappy sitting all day long in this narrow little shop working on one pair of shoes after another?" To which the cobbler said, "Yes, I do sometimes, but when I can't stand it any longer I get up and open the door," and then he rose and unlatched the door at the rear of his cramped shop and, lo! there was a full view of the ocean stretching to a shoreless horizon. So some of the most rememberable inspirations that ever come to us come from plain people with common tasks but with such horizons around that once having seen them we never have been able to forget.

Indeed, some of our profoundest inspirations come from people facing that most commonplace of all things, bearing trouble. The other evening I spent in company with a woman who holds one of the most important positions held by a woman in the United States. She wanted to tell me something. She made the whole company keep still so that she could tell it to me. She had already told them but she wanted to tell it again. Obviously it was something that had gone deep with her and made a difference to life. And when it came out it was simply that she had known a woman whom I had never heard of and of whom you would never hear, upon whom fell a fatal disease and who month after month watched death, as Walt Whitman said, "gliding near with soft feet," and who handled that situation not with courage merely but with gaiety, with radiance and gaiety so that as the sick room passed gradually into the death chamber it was filled with light. As that strong, efficient woman went on telling of that experience, one could see that as long as she lived, whenever she thought of the reality of the spiritual world, of the interior victory of soul over circumstance, of the creative power of faith and hope and love, she would remember that radiant character. This, then, is the

truth: fine personal character is not commonplace—not anywhere, at any time, in anybody.

Again, let us say, Friendliness is not commonplace and, no matter how mediocre our lives, that lies within our reach. Indeed, here once more one stands in amazement before Jesus. He came with a world task on his mind. His was a cosmic proclamation which started by taking monotheism morally in earnest and ended by taking all mankind as the object of redemption. Yet listen to this universal spirit who loved the world: "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only . . . he shall in no wise lose his reward." What a glorification of the commonplace!

Indeed, in his adjustment of available means to the ends that he desired, Jesus was necessarily thrown back upon just such friendliness. For of all the great organized world systems by which men commonly conquer and control their fellows, not one was at the Master's disposal. The political system was not at his disposal; he could not use that. The economic system was not his; he could not utilize that. Only one method of world-wide influence was within his reach, the great friendship system whereby one friend touched another and he another and he another, until across the Roman Empire the flame of ideas and ideals and goodwill burned like a fire and souls were alienated from their allegiance to the pagan world and won to another spirit and devotion. In a profound sense that whole amazing victory of early Christianity rests back on this glorification of the commonplace.

We ministers talk too much about the great characters in the New Testament as though they did it all. We too frequently forget the commonplace work that went on in the background day in and day out, the utilization of homely relationships, the operation of what William James of Harvard once called "the invisible molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual, stealing in through the crannies of the world like so many soft rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, and yet rending the hardest monuments of man's pride, if you give them time." So!

Indeed, who were the twelve disciples? You who all these years have been reared in Christian churches ought to be able to name the twelve disciples. How many here can do it? Certainly I cannot. I know the top three, Peter and James and John, and the bottom one, Judas Iscariot, but the commonplace eight in between, who individually made so little impress on the world that only dimly now and then does a name steal into memory, who were they? Yet think what Jesus did with such commonplace people through the network of the world's friendship system!

How commonly we think of friendship as a sweet and gentle grace. Upon the contrary, it is one of the most tremendous forces in the world. Like Antæus wrestling with the giant, who lifted from the earth lost all his strength, so if we be lifted up a little from our friendships we are emptied of our power. Trace any individual's strength back to its creative origins and you come to a circle of friends. Estimate any major event in history and if you go deeply enough you will come to the centrality of the influence of friends. So the most potent spiritual event in man's history was associated with an upper room and one saying to his fellows, "Ye are my friends. . . . No longer

do I call you servants . . . but I have called you friends."

Now, in this closely reticulated world friendship system we inevitably have a part and what we are saying today is, Glorify it. You never can tell what may come of cosmic import out of friendliness because, while you touch one, he touches yet another, and so you go on working forever.

In Manchukuo the Japanese personal adviser to the Emperor, Henry Pu Yi, is a man whose manner of thought is of significance to the world. That Japanese once was in America and interested in Christianity, so that he said to one of our ministers, "I really do not care much for church architecture, nor for the sermons you ministers give. It is enough for me if someone would really show me Jesus Christ." What happened to that Japanese here, then, was of import and, alas! what happened was unfriendliness and discourtesy. Refused service and forced out of a shop because of his color, he closed the door not of the shop only but of his mind against Christ and the country which professed him. How little those plain people doing that commonplace thing foresaw its planetary repercussions!

There is one parable of Jesus which at times seems to me verily true although it is such a glorification of the commonplace that one is sorely tempted to incredulity. At the Great Assize, the Master said, when God gathers all the nations of the world before him to judge men's lives, only one question will he ask: How friendly were you? How friendly to the least of these my brethren? To the hungry, thirsty, sick, poor, naked, and imprisoned how friendly were you? If the world-wide friendship system is anything like as important as that, then what God said to Moses he is saying now to every one in this company: "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

One more step of importance I ask you to take. If we are ordinary people in commonplace circumstances, then we belong to the great majority of humankind and in the long run what we plain people want and are determined to have we can get. Ordinary men are like the temperate zone—the creative energies of the world are there. The Arctic is too cold, the tropics are too hot for most kinds of energy. So are the extremes of human life, but out of the temperate zone, I suspect, come the ultimate issues of the world.

Now, one thing supremely we plain people of life's middle zone ought to want—a kind of social order in which we can glorify our commonplace tasks. For all through this sermon I have been haunted by the thought of men and women who cannot glorify what they are doing and ought not to glorify it. In a town not far from here the main industry is the manufacture of munitions. Those factories now are working overtime, the more's the pity. In that town there is a church were Christian laymen, often with fierce struggles of conscience, are making their livelihood by producing munitions, and a minister, heartsick, who knows that his work is supported by the manufacture of engines of destruction which even this morning when he is preaching Christ, may be blowing Ethiopian Christians into eternity. How can one glorify such tasks? How can one lift them up and say, Whatsoever we do, to the glory of God?

As this sermon has proceeded, many of you have doubtless thought of it as an encouraging personal message. I should be glad to have it such for many.

It is amazing what a man's spiritual insight can do with his mediocrities. Once in Germany there was a vulgar folksong about fleas in straw. To call it commonplace is to put it mildly; it was worse than that. And then Beethoven came and looked at it. Some of you know the soaring melody of the Rondo in the Waldstein Sonata. That is what Beethoven did with a commonplace mediocrity. It is amazing what an individual by spiritual insight can do with the commonplace, but that is not the whole story. Too many things our social order as at present organized forces plain people to do which they cannot and ought not to glorify.

If a minister is merely an individualist, he will say to consciences one by one, If *you* are doing anything so unethical and anti-social that you cannot see spiritual meaning in it and cannot elevate it as a contribution to the total good, then stop it! But while that appeal is doubtless applicable in many cases, no realistic mind will be content to stop there. There are too many places in the social order, such as those munition factories, where plain folk are dragooned by the terrific pressures of economic need to do things which cannot and must not be glorified.

Ah, America, there is your real social problem. Look out across the world and see. We think men ought to want liberty. But one other thing they want so much that on every side they sell to get it the last shred of liberty they have. They want to see their little lives lifted out of insignificance into contributory participation in a great whole in which they verily believe. They want that though it be a national state, like Italy, to which they give themselves, or a racial state, like Germany, or an economic communism, like Russia. They want freedom but they also want to be carried out of themselves by something greater than themselves in serving which every humble thing they do can count. Now the enormous popular response which always arises, as it rose in America during the Great War, when social life is thus seen as a coöperative whole in which every humble task can fill a part, as though a man laid but a single stone in a cathedral where all might worship—that heartfelt response reveals how pathetically the plain man wants the redemption of his commonplace tasks and their elevation into participant contributions to the general good. To build here in America, without losing our traditional liberties, a more coöperative commonwealth in which the ordinary tasks of every humble man could thus be glorified would be a long step toward the kingdom of God. But, friends, we are a long sea-mile from that yet!

In the meantime, before we reach that social goal, I suspect that every one of us could do better in his private life than he is doing. Edwin Booth, the actor, concerning whom Joseph Jefferson said that he ran his theater behind the curtain as though it were a church, once received from a cowardly clergyman a letter saying that the clergyman would like to come to the theater but was afraid some of his parishioners might object, and wasn't there a side door or a back door through which he could come without being seen? To which Edwin Booth sent this ringing answer: "There is no door in my theatre through which God cannot see." I commend that to you, that you may take it from an actor if you might not from a preacher: No door in my theatre, my business, my home, my private character, whether I

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Prayer

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

Eternal Spirit, with what varied needs Thy people seek Thy sanctuary! We come with the need of worship in our hearts. Through another week we have commanded things below us and now we would be commanded by the One above us. Lift us above ourselves, elevated by our reverence and adoration. Touch our spirits with the grace of reverence. Open our eyes to see things worth loving, worthy of devotion, that we may be carried out of ourselves by something greater than ourselves. Let the spirit of adoration descend upon this people.

We come with the needs begotten of sin. We are ashamed of ourselves. Our lives have been filled with humiliations, and in honest hours we know it is not ill circumstance alone but ill hearts and ill wills that are our curse. We acknowledge infidelities to our best selves and to our friends, betrayal of trust toward those who have loved us, unworthy selfishness and ignoble declination of opportunity to be of use in a needy world. Give us grace to lay before our own eyes and before Thee these moral afflictions which we would gladly hide from our closest friends, that, forgiven, cleansed, elevated, reinstated, and reempowered we may go forth to live more excellent lives.

We come before Thee with needs begotten of trouble. We are affrighted by our ill estate; the buffetings of circumstance are more than we can bear; the spirit often is willing but the flesh is weak. O God, Who hast so mysteriously housed us in this fallible and frail flesh and surrounded us with the mystery of adverse circumstance, steady and strengthen us in the same that our hearts fail not. We ask not for easier days if they may not come, but for greater courage, O God, Thy people pray.

We come with the needs begotten of power. For we are young and strong and have lives to give. The world without, with all its eager offering, presents nothing worthy that we should live and, if need be, die for it. Such causes only are found in Thee and Thy Christ and, lo! our power cries out to Thee that Thou shouldst take it and do with it something useful before we fall on sleep.

As thus we pray for ourselves we are minded of the multitudes across the world praying in many conventicles of worship. We ask not what symbols they use or what creeds they profess. Our hearts go out to them, our human brethren, trying in the midst of a world that drags them down to lift up their spirits and find divine meaning. Whatever names they give to Thee, receive them, Thou Spirit of all grace. Hath not one Father begotten us? Are we not the children of one God? Help us to love one another as Thou hast loved us.

Send us out, we beseech Thee, to face the ill estate of a troubled world. We are penitent not simply for the evils we individually have done but for the larger evils in which we socially have shared. Often as we have professed love of our children, Thou seest the world we have made and are turning to their hands. God have mercy upon

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As Religion Sees It

By The Rt. Rev. James E. Freeman, D. D.
Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Washington, D. C.

It is becoming increasingly clear that one of the fundamental causes of the long continued depression is a moral decline in the life of the nation. While we are attempting through legislation to rehabilitate our economic and industrial household, we are coming to believe that our emergency efforts will prove ineffectual unless moral and ethical principles are re-established in the life of our people. That the Churches have failed in part to discharge their whole obligation and that this is due to a lack of unity of action has compelled the clergy of the city of Washington to join their forces in a concerted movement and to bring the whole influence of the Church to bear upon the life of the city.

For over a year, under the Chairmanship of the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Washington, supplemented by the untiring efforts of Canon Anson Phelps Stokes, the clergy representing all communions and fellowships within the city have been meeting together for the purpose of considering what corporate action might be taken that the people of the capital city might be more fully reached and served by the Churches and the high claims of religion presented to them.

In this corporate effort all the religious bodies, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant, have formed a fellowship, and apart from the practical results that have already accrued to the Committee's effort, the impact of it upon the life of the community is far-reaching and salutary. A spirit of comradeship has characterized the movement and the clergy have recognized that the gravity of the present situation calls for and demands more of corporate and united action on the part of the Churches of every name. The dominant theme of this movement concerns "Religious Life in the Nation's Capital."

Recognizing the fact that 110,000 of the people of the city are engaged in public service and that, with their families, they represent over one-half of the entire population, a special effort has been made to reach every individual from the highest executive officers and public servant to the humblest employee, and it is expected before the present winter passes that, by a systematic and painstaking canvass, every resident of the city will be reached and his religious preferences known. A central office has been established with an Executive Secretary and a Central Committee, meeting frequently and representative of the three great religious bodies, is heartily coöperating.

I cite the foregoing as illustrative, on the one hand, of the urgent need of more coöperation between the clergy and Churches of every name, this in view of the exigencies of the present critical hour; and, on the other, in demonstration of a basis of united action that does not in any wise interfere with the autonomy of any of the respective bodies.

To the most casual observer it must be evident that some form of united action must mark the work of the

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A "Wood Expert" Comes to the Church

By Eugene C. Carder

Recently we had a fascinating experience in the course of an interview with a caller who dropped into our study during "office hours." Many people come on many different errands, all of them welcome, but not before have we had just such a point of contact. The gentleman introduced himself as a workman who had been employed on our job and whose particular commission was to cruise the timber lands in various parts of the country in search of the oak lumber that could be worked up into the beams and panels and pews of our projected building. We had long since learned that one could find a specialist in New York for any conceivable task but were not altogether prepared to meet a wood expert, a man who makes it his business to track down the particular tree or trees a specific job may call for, taking account of the grain and texture, the height and circumference, the remoteness from adequate saw-mills, the transportation problems involved and numerous other details that would never occur to us. We would be more prone to think of the story of the wood we have used in our building as an unvarnished tale.

In the first place he told us its name. It is white oak, *quercus alba,* all of it, a wood that is strong, tough, close-grained, durable. No wood available in America in our day, so the expert says, has a wider range of usefulness and none offers a more beautiful surface for finishing, either for furniture or building material. The expert himself, it developed in the interview, is as well authenticated and documented as are the trees and forests of which he has made a life study. The revelation that this particular expert is a graduate of the Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wisconsin, brought to our mind the story of Mr. Koehler who conducted the still-hunt which led from forest and saw-mill and lumber yard to the attic of a Bronx house and thence to a New Jersey courtroom.

Our friend obviously finds his vocation to be a labor of love. The white oak in summer foliage is one of the loveliest of America's trees and at the time of autumn lends colors that others cannot match. It was with real affection for the trees and their history that he talked of his specialty, the white oak. It is one of the most widely distributed broad leaf trees in the United States. It attains very great size, occasionally growing to a height of one hundred and fifty feet, and lives on, when spared by forest fire or woodman's axe, to an age of two and sometimes three hundred years. If some time in this church you seem to feel the newness and you long for the mellowness of the old cathedrals, take thought of the pews and choir-stalls and gallery fronts. They have been a part of the great cathedral of the forest these past two hundred years and have been reaching upward, ever upward, after the Gothic manner.

And now you may very well ask what bearing all of this actually has with respect to The Riverside Church. Just this. Our friend, Mr. James King, was employed by the contractors when plans were far enough advanced to be able to say how much oak would be needed

here, and in what length and sizes and of what quality, to cruise the oak timber lands of the country for the purpose of finding and identifying available timber to be prepared for manufacture into such lengths and sizes as we would need. Then began the still-hunt.

The beams of the first and second galleries came from original growth timber in the Tuscarora Valley of Pennsylvania. Due to their very great dimensions, linear and cubic, unusual difficulty was encountered getting them down without undue damage and then in moving them out on the soft ground and over the mountain roads near East Waterford, Juniata County. The exact location from which these trees came was a remote section, far from any beaten path. Each tree was more than two hundred and fifty years old and did not readily lend itself to being uprooted from its native habitat and transplanted into the unfamiliar confines of a Gothic church, walled about by steel and limestone. Its resistance to this process was so effective that recourse to many teams and various devices was necessary, after it was felled, even to the extremity of bringing tractor engines in from a distance, to move it from the deep bed it had made for itself in its fall.

The wood for the pews came from the vicinity of Ellamore, Upshur County, West Virginia, in what is known as Cheat River Valley section, spoken of popularly as the "Switzerland of America," at least so thought of by the proud and loyal people of that old state. The texture of this oak is relatively soft and, in the language of the carpenter and cabinet-maker, easily worked. These trees were each from one hundred and fifty to two hundred years old and were taken from a very dense and extensive forest capable of producing many millions of feet of lumber annually.

Look about you here and there in the church and you will see many other places than those mentioned above where oak has been used for structural purposes, omitting in this article any reference to the oak used in the reproductions of Old English furniture. The book-cases, panelling, mouldings, etc. are of oak that came from the vicinity of Royalton, Breathitt County, Kentucky, in what is known as the Big Sandy River section, probably the most picturesque lumbering region in the entire country, as primitive now certainly as one could have hoped to find in our land even back there generations ago when these great oaks were beginning to rise above the small growth. Sparsely settled by descendants of early American pioneers of Anglo-Saxon origin these great forests of Kentucky have cradled sturdy souls and seeded sturdy trees for the enrichment of the life of distant peoples in radically different environments.

New York City seems a long way off, even in miles, from the Virginia and Kentucky forests, but it's much farther than the mileage indicates when one considers the processes through which one of these trees has to pass before it is ready to meet the various ordinances and codes which the city imposes. We will assume that our readers understand well enough the processes by which an oak tree is gotten out of the woods, through the mill, into the shop, onto the job, in place and ready for use. But, and this is a very strange *but*, let us tell you what our wood expert told us about the fireproofing process through which it must pass, for no wood can be used structurally in a building like this in

New York City that has not been scientifically fireproofed.

After these trees were felled and manufactured into lumber of the proper thicknesses and piled for air-drying, being dried to a moisture content of not more than forty per cent, there came the fireproofing process to meet the requirements of the building code of New York City.

All of the lumber had to be placed in a huge retort or cylinder of heavy steel construction which was tightly sealed when it had been filled to capacity. Then through vents or valves with which the cylinder is equipped the fireproofing solution of salt, ammonia and other ingredients was forced into the chamber. A very high steam pressure was applied which together with a vacuum, or tendency toward it induced by chemical action, accomplished a complete impregnation of the lumber.

Then came the tests to disclose whether or not the process had effectively established resistance to fire. Borings were made into the centers of numerous pieces and the fine shavings thus obtained were subjected to a flame of the temperature of approximately seventeen hundred degrees Fahrenheit. If the shavings produced a flame or even a red glow for ten seconds when removed from the torch it was judged unsafe material and subjected to further impregnation operations until the ten-second standard was satisfied.

Before removing the lumber from the retort the fireproofing solution was withdrawn by pumps to storage tanks and a powerful vacuum induced in the cylinders to force the drying process. This treatment is only partially effective, however, for the lumber will still be found to have a moisture content of about eighty per cent, which is altogether too high for any security against warping under ordinary use for building purposes. All wood is very susceptible to climatic changes and this is especially true of the oak with which we are dealing. Therefore the familiar kiln-drying process is introduced and eventually the average moisture content is reduced to seven per cent or even lower. In another forty-eight hours the lumber comes out of the tempering room and is ready for the hand of the carpenter, the cabinet-maker, or the wood-carver.

Is the wood in The Riverside Church really fireproof? Even the suggestion is new to many people and we can anticipate a lifted eyebrow here and there as the skeptic covertly suggests that an actual test would be interesting. So it would, and we have already had it. In fact we had the test staged by workmen in the building soon after the first fireproofed wood arrived on the job. The men handling it had no doubts themselves. They were quite familiar with its non-inflammable quality. But a plumber had been called from outside to seal up a sidewalk pipe connection of some sort. He and his helper arrived while the workmen were at lunch, sitting around in groups during their off hour. Watching the plumber setting up his pot to melt down some bars of lead or solder, whatever it was, a facetiously inclined member of one of the crafts began to make himself helpful and useful to the two strangers. He gathered a goodly pile of wood of various sizes, carefully saw to it that the available shavings for kindling nearby were also of the fireproofed variety, and with his fast-growing and intensely interested group of onlookers, awaited the process of building a fire to melt down that metal. Suffice it to say here that

it was a great show. The first card of matches would not work at all. But many helpful hands proffered others, and still others, until the guffaws could be suppressed no longer and in fact the plumber and his helper had come to the conclusion that there was something radically wrong. Yes, the wood is fireproofed and, what is still more interesting, it is actually fireproof.

Above all else in this tale of the trees we are intrigued and impressed by the realization that these monarchs of the forest from which our wood has come had been living things for two or three hundred years. On our desk is a small piece of oak that came out of the foundation beams of Winchester Cathedral in England a few years ago when some repairs were being made there. For eight hundred years it was under water and it shows no sign of decay or disintegration. As we talked with our friend, the wood expert, and cruised with him in imagination through the forests of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kentucky in search of trees to bring here to our place of worship we thought of Joyce Kilmer and his line, "Only God can make a tree," the God of whom the Scriptures say, "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night."

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SERMON

(Continued from page 8)

eat or drink or whatsoever I do, no door through which God cannot see.

PRAYER

Eternal Spirit, lift us up, we beseech Thee, until all the plain tasks and causes and interests of our mediocre days may be touched with glory as though the sun had risen on them, which made beautiful not only the mountains but the colors of the grass in the fields. Amen.

Dr. Fosdick preached the foregoing sermon October 6, 1935.

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AS RELIGION SEES IT

(Continued from page 10)

Church throughout the nation and ultimately throughout the world. If the column of the religious forces is invaded or broken, it will imperil the Church as an institution and have a disastrous effect upon the religious bodies of every name. The time for "proud isolation" is past. The time for real fellowship and united action is at hand.

At the recent meeting in Washington, Secretary Hull said: "The present dangers challenge the Church to engage in what should be nothing less than a flaming crusade to improve conditions that have a dangerous aspect." An excess of parochialism and an excess of denominational pride constitute the chief menaces that threaten the Church today. If the fifty-five million people in this country who are nominally or actually affiliated with the Church could be united in what Secretary Hull calls a "flaming crusade," it would do more to restore our social and economic order than all our boasted plans and emergency legislation. Sanity, good judgment, yes, and good statesmanship, call for the uniting of the religious forces of America in such an undertaking.

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AT THE RIGHT:
Unusual treatment of the revolving-door problem. This entrance gives access directly from the garden into the Cloister.

Garden and Nursery School play area now in use south of our building. The arches in the left background are part of the loggia of the Garden House in which are class rooms, wash rooms, and storage space.

Snapshots by Ashley Hastings of our church staff

The Employment Service

By Clare M. Tousley

"Mrs. Murray* has a lifetime job. . . ."

Behind that phrase is something more than a fine sense of security for Mrs. Murray, and it's been a long time since Mrs. Murray has had a real sense of security.

Behind that phrase lies the fact that Mrs. Murray's employer is satisfied, for it comes as a direct quotation from a letter sent by an employer to the Employment Service of The Riverside Church and the Charity Organization Society, coöperating with the New York State Employment Service.

Behind that phrase is the major objective of the Employment Service—service to employer and employee alike, in bringing together the right person and the right job.

Mrs. Murray is but one of 1,485 men and women who have been placed in jobs during the past year by the Employment Service in the fourth year of its service to those people who have needed jobs, and needed them desperately, and to those people who needed workers.

And the employer who wrote about Mrs. Murray was only one of between 700 and 800 employers who turn regularly to the Employment Service when they need help, with assurance that the workers sent to them will be carefully selected with respect to their ability to undertake the job which is to be filled.

Consider the employer of Mrs. Murray. She first asked for a housekeeper and frankly stated she expected she would have to "try several" before she found one who would suit. But she found Mrs. Murray, who has a lifetime job, on the first try. Then she needed a house man, one who could wax floors and do all sorts of odd jobs, and she called the Employment Service and secured just the sort of a man she needed. Again she wanted someone to do fine sewing and again the Employment Service sent her a capable seamstress.

And this is no unusual case, for many employers have found similarly satisfactory workers. In fact, some employers are so certain of the ability of the Employment Service to fill their needs that they make rather unusual requests. One employer who has used the Service for three years called in from the country in the early fall and asked that her city house be staffed with suitable servants when she arrived home from the country. Another called for someone who was qualified to do some shopping for her.

During the year 58.4 per cent of the women placed were given jobs in domestic and personal service, but the ability of the Employment Service to find capable persons for such work is not limited to private families.

One complete hotel, a small hotel to be sure, was staffed through coöperation with the Employment Service. The manager of the hotel had used the Service from time to time and had built up a faith in its ability to give him the sort of men and women he needed. When he took over the management of a new hotel and needed a staff, he promptly turned to the Service,

*Not her real name.

calling for cooks, maids, elevator operators, and all sorts of hotel workers. The workers were sent to him. A few weeks after he had opened his hotel he wrote to the Service thanking them and advising that his guests were complimenting him on "the efficiency and courtesy" of his staff.

The Employment Service also is continually gaining new friends in the field of business—ten per cent of its placements last year were in clerical and sales jobs. One specialty shop, which has a large Christmas trade, has talked over with the Service its needs for the coming Christmas season when it will require the services of some 80 or 90 additional workers, and the Service is helping with this problem. Already the Service has untangled one difficulty for this employer. He confessed he needed expert filing help and had been unable to find it. In the files of the Service was the card of a woman who had past experience in filing, although she had admitted she was "willing to take anything." The woman was promptly sent for and found to be qualified as an expert in filing. Today she is in charge of the files of the specialty shop and has been given the task of setting up and staffing the temporary filing staff which is to be utilized during the Christmas season.

And all of this is accomplished through careful coöperation with the New York State Employment Service and studied effort to learn of all of the capabilities of those applicants who come to the Service for work. The purpose to serve employer and employee alike is always paramount, because a dissatisfied employer means just one less job opportunity for those who need work badly. The satisfaction of employers is demonstrated by the fact that 55 per cent of the jobs given last year came from those who had used the Service before.

Through it all there is an atmosphere of personal interest that makes for successful employment. The writer called at the offices of the Employment Service just a few days ago to talk with Mrs. Irma Cowley and Miss Emilie Strauss, who direct its work. While talking with them, the telephone rang. Miss Strauss answered it, and as she hung up she said:

"It's Mr. Jones*, and he's got the job. He can't come back to report today because he wants to go home to sleep. He starts tonight."

There was a sense of victory in Miss Strauss's voice, and Mrs. Cowley echoed it when she said "Fine."

Mr. Jones was slightly past the age of ready employability. He had been placed as a night watchman in a hotel, where his age did not matter a great deal, for he offered dependability, loyalty, and a keen sense of responsibility.

It took perseverance to place Mr. Jones, but perseverance finally found him a job for which he was suited, and one which he could fill to the complete satisfaction of the employer. It's our guess that it won't be long before—"Mr. Jones has a lifetime job."

The Employment Service handles all sorts of workers, of both sexes and it has no age limits. During the past year 51.9 per cent of those placed were between the ages of 21 and 40 years of age—the ages when employability is greater. But it is worth noting that the Service found employment for a considerable number, 37 per cent of all placements, between the ages of 41 and 55 years of age, and 5.1 per cent between

*Not his real name.

the ages of 56 and 70. Four per cent of the placements were for persons over 70 years of age, and two per cent were persons under 21 years of age.

In the four years in which it has been operating, the Employment Service found jobs which have brought wages totalling very close to half a million dollars to those in need of work.

The report for these four years shows that wages paid those placed by the Service amount to $472,636.35.

The Riverside Church has made excellent use of this Service which it sponsors, for last year persons placed in jobs provided through The Riverside Church received $23,761.60 in wages or 14 per cent of all wages earned.

The Riverside Church can make even greater use of the Employment Service. Merely dial LExington 2-0900 and ask for Mrs. Cowley or Miss Strauss, and state your employment needs.

There are plenty of Mrs. Murrays ready to fill lifetime jobs, or undertake a temporary task.

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PRAYER

(*Continued from page 9*)

them and upon us! Quicken our hearts to deeper insights, our minds to nobler thoughts, our spirits to more humane endeavors. Grant us not only the hatred of war but a constructive love and vision of peace. And so guide Thy people, we beseech Thee, that though it be but little that one by one we can perform, yet all together may our broken threads make a golden cable that shall bind humanity closer to the throne of God.

We ask it in the spirit of the Christ. Amen.

To CHURCH MONTHLY Readers in Foreign Lands:

Regularly our publication goes to a considerable list of people who are resident outside of the United States. We are highly interested in this group and covet some opportunity to know you personally and to become acquainted with your particular interests and activities in the places where you may be living.

As we attempt to bring the church to you through the pages of THE CHURCH MONTHLY we wonder if you would not be interested to bring yourselves, your families, and your life situations to us through letters that you will be willing to write for publication in THE CHURCH MONTHLY from time to time. We would greatly enjoy the contribution that such a correspondence between you and us would make. We are pretty parochial here in New York, regrettably so, and we need your more cosmopolitan influence. Not only would we here in the Church be interested to know that you were out there in the far places of the world keeping alive a concern for our common task but it would be very interesting to other readers to know that people similarly placed, perhaps not so far away from them personally, had a stake back here in New York in the life and program of The Riverside Church. We urge you to take your pen in hand and write, as the spirit may move, intimately about yourselves and your family if you will, or about your city, social and economic life, or anything else that is in line with the sort of interest that you might have if you were back home and others were out in the far places.

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CHRISTMAS SEALS FIGHT
TUBERCULOSIS

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BUY THEM AND USE THEM

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A THANKSGIVING PRAYER

O God, we thank Thee for this universe, our great home; for its vastness and its riches, and for the manifoldness of the life which teems upon it and of which we are part. We praise Thee for the arching sky and the blessed winds, for the driving clouds and the constellations on high. We praise Thee for the salt sea and the running water, for the everlasting hills, for the trees, and for the grass under our feet. We thank Thee for our senses by which we can see the splendor of the morning, and hear the jubilant songs of love, and smell the breath of the springtime.

Grant us, we pray Thee, a heart wide open to all this joy and beauty, and save our souls from being so steeped in care or so darkened by passion that we pass heedless and unseeing when even the thornbush by the wayside is aflame with the glory of God.

Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all the living things, our little brothers, to whom thou hast given this earth as their home in common with us. . . . May we realize that they live, not for us alone, but for themselves and for thee, and that they love the sweetness of life even as we, and serve Thee in their place better than we in ours.

When our use of this world is over and we make room for others, may we not leave anything ravished by our greed or spoiled by our ignorance, but may we hand on our common heritage fairer and sweeter through our use of it, undiminished in fertility and joy, that so our bodies may return in peace to the great mother who nourished them and our spirits may round the circle of a perfect life in Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.—*From "Prayers of the Social Awakening" by Walter Rauschenbusch.*

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Books by Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick are listed below. Any book will be sent postpaid by THE CHURCH MONTHLY on the receipt of the list price.

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